First Last

Course Code

Instructor Name

1 January 2023

Your Title Here

*NOTE: This guiding paper makes use of MLA 8 in its organization and citations. You may wish to use or be required to use another system such as APA. Refer to a credible online guide such as Purdue OWL to assist with organizing and citing using different citation systems. This template was developed by Catherine Booker, Feast Centre Research Coordinator.*

Your first paragraph (and every paragraph) starts with an indentation. The rest of the paragraph will be justified to the left of the page. Your introduction should introduce your thesis and sub-arguments using a confident tone and formal voice. Your thesis is the central argument of your paper. A good thesis will have two parts, “it should tell what you plan to argue, and it should "telegraph" how you plan to argue—that is, what particular support for your claim is going where in your essay” (Harvard Writing Centre). It should be able to answer “What, How and So, What?” (UCLA Undergraduate Writing Centre). A good thesis will convey the central claim, how is this claim is supported, and why it matters. These aspects are important to consider when formulating your thesis to ensure you adequately set up your argument and to organize the rest of your paper (and this is also a transition sentence).

Your second paragraph is here. Structure each body paragraph with an introductory sentence to frame the rest of the paragraph. Paragraphs should be organized to group your thoughts. Each should touch on a different sub-argument or topic of analysis. If you are having trouble organizing your paragraphs, consider making a preliminary outline to map your ideas. You may wish to make use of the *Bullet Point Draft Essay Outline Template* contained at the end of this document. Drafting a preliminary outline can assist in organization and flow of your sub-arguments and ensuring that your points connect back to your central thesis, which is important in formulating and substantiating the central argument of your paper. Additionally, make use of “transition words” to connect ideas within your paragraphs (The Writing Centre). For clarity you should define any terms you are using, generally through analysis of your source texts and through use of quotations to ground your work. Using quotations from other sources brings in voices of community and scholarly experts to support the arguments you are making. It may be beneficial to read over your paper with a critical eye looking for vague concepts and add specificity to your analysis through careful attention to and uses of quotations from your source texts to make your paper stronger.

Your third paragraph is here. This body paragraph should also start with a topic sentence related to your sub-argument. Ground your arguments through specificity to the texts you are analysing by engaging in close reading and including quotations with proper MLA 8 inline citations. Remember to “provide the author and specific page number” in your citations for texts (Purdue Online Writing Lab). See the MLA 8 guide for citing other types of sources. There are different formatting requirements for shorter and longer quotations:

For quotations that are more than four lines of prose or three lines of verse, place quotations in a free-standing block of text and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented 1/2 inch from the left margin while maintaining double-spacing. Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (Purdue Online Writing Lab)

Always follow any quotation, whether long or short, with your own analysis. Never leave a quotation floating without analysis and integration through your own commentary. Make quotes work for your argument! Don’t give your paper away to your texts by overusing quotations and not sufficiently engaging in analysis.

Your fourth paragraph is here. Use as many paragraphs as you need to make your argument. If you are struggling to reach your word count goal, ask yourself some critical questions about your paper. Are all your key concepts defined? Where might your argument benefit from increased clarity, specificity, or a quotation? If you find you are reaching the limit of your word count before you finish making your argument, don’t worry! After you finish writing your first draft, you will need to edit your paper, which may mean you reorganize your ideas, omit repetition, or condense your sentences by removing extra ~~flowery, superlative, excellent, magnificent language or superfluous, extra, long-winded ideas and sentences made of~~ words that don’t support your argument. Once you edit for structure, repetition, and flow, you can do a second, closer copy-edit for grammar, spelling, or other smaller errors that detract from the readability of your paper. A good practice is to complete a copy-edit after taking a short break from your paper, or even having someone else copy-edit your paper. Additionally, if you are currently an undergraduate or graduate post-secondary student, consider making an appointment with your institution’s writing centre, for example the McMaster Writing Centre (McMaster Writing Centre), for assistance at any stage in your writing process. At the McMaster Writing Centre, trained writing advisors are available for one-on-one appointments to “help you take your writing skills to the next level” (McMaster Writing Centre). Finally, you may wish to refer to a writing rubric to identify potential weaknesses in your paper. These are widely available online by searching for the keywords, ‘*writing rubric’*. Reading your paper with a critical eye for where it falls within a rubric can help identify areas for improvement before you submit your final draft.

Your conclusion is here. A good conclusion paragraph will wrap up your sub-arguments and return to your thesis with new observations about its significance. You may wish to summarize your main points in the paper and include a quotation, “evoke a vivid image,” suggest results or consequences, or maybe ask a “provocative question” (University of Richmond Writing Centre). Your conclusion should maintain formal essay voice and should avoid use of phrases like ‘in conclusion,’ or ‘to conclude’ as these are generally useful in an oral presentation or conference papers. Regardless of the way you choose to conclude your essay, your final sentence should bring your essay to a confident and satisfying end.

Works Cited

Harvard College Writing Centre, “Developing A Thesis,” *Harvard University*.

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/developing-thesis#:~:text=A%20good%20thesis%20has%20two,going%20where%20in%20your%20essay.&text=First%2C%20analyze%20your%20primary%20sources,controversy%2C%20and%2For%20complication>.

McMaster Writing Centre, “Writing Support,” *McMaster Student Success Centre Website,*

<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/writing-support/>.

Purdue Online Writing Lab, “MLA Formatting Quotations,” *Purdue University.*

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_quotations.html>.

The Writing Center, “Transitions,” *University of North Carolina*.

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/transitions/>.

UCLA Undergraduate Writing Centre, “What, How and So What?

Approaching the Thesis as a Process,” *UCLA College*. <https://wp.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/UWC_handouts_What-How-So-What-Thesis-revised-5-4-15-RZ.pdf>.

University of Richmond Writing Centre, “Writer’s Web: First Drafts,” *University of Richmond*

*Writers Web.* <http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/conclude.html>.

**Bullet Point Draft Essay Outline Template**

Essay or Research Question:

Draft Title:

**Introduction**

Opening hook:

Background information:

Draft Thesis:

* What?
* How?
* So, what?

Sub-Arguments:

Transition:

**Body Paragraphs**

1. Topic sentence and sub argument (*what?*):

Evidence with citations (*how?*):

What I think about the evidence, connected to my thesis (*so what?*):

Transition sentence:

2. Topic sentence and sub argument (*what?*):

Evidence with citations (*how?*):

What I think about the evidence, connected to my thesis (*so what?*):

Transition sentence:

3. Topic sentence and sub argument (*what?*):

Evidence with citations (*how?*):

What I think about the evidence, connected to my thesis (*so what?*):

Transition sentence:

**Conclusion**

Paraphrased thesis statement:

Brief summary of arguments and how they support my thesis:

What I think about the evidence or why it matters:

Strong closing statement: